

MARY BENNETT, WIDOW OF CHARLES.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 403.]

MARCH 19, 1860.

Mr. FOSTER, from the Committee on Invalid Pensions, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Invalid Pensions, to whom was referred the petition of Mary Bennett, praying to be allowed a pension, have had the same under consideration, and report:

That the proofs on file establish the following facts: The petitioner is the widow of Charles W. Bennett, deceased, late a captain in the United States revenue service. Captain Bennett was commissioned as lieutenant in said service April 10, 1839; served at various stations on the Atlantic coast until the spring of 1850, when he was ordered to the San Francisco station, to which he repaired on the barque *Polk* as first lieutenant. After his arrival he was transferred to the revenue brig *Lawrence*, and remained thereon doing active duty, under Captain Douglass Ottinger, until November 25, 1851, when said brig was wrecked and lost. Up to this time, as is testified by Captain Webster, of the barque *Polk*, there was not a more healthy or robust person in the service. On the night of the wreck he engaged actively on the beach and in the water in saving valuable government property from the vessel. The weather was inclement, and he was much exposed in the water. From that time his health was broken and declined. He returned from San Francisco in 1852, under the care of Captain Webster, and during the voyage his health failed so rapidly that Captain Webster did not expect him to survive long enough to reach home. He reached home, and, from illness, was excused from duty until August 9, 1853, when he was so far restored as to be ordered to the Wilmington station, and attached to the cutter *Forward*. In January, 1854, he was despatched, in command of the *Forwaad*, in search of the survivors of the wreck of the steamer *San Francisco*. From a report of that cruise, made by Captain Bennett to the collector of customs of the Delaware district, January 24, 1854, it appears that he was sent to sea with but one officer, to wit: a third lieutenant; that this officer, though of unexceptionable character, was too inexperienced to be left in charge of the deck during such severe weather as was encountered, and that nearly one-half of the crew

were disabled and sick the greater part of the time. Thus it became necessary that Captain Bennett should keep the deck during snow and rain, and in so doing he contracted a severe cold, from which he never recovered. After his return he had frequent hemorrhage of the lungs, which rendered him incompetent to discharge the duties of his office, and of which he died on the 15th day of June, 1855.

The physicians who attended upon Captain Bennett during his last illness unhesitatingly ascribed the disease causing his death to the exposures above stated. The committee concur in this opinion.

Captain Bennett, it appears, co-operated with the army in his official capacity during the late war with Mexico; but at the time of his decease, and at the time of the exposures causing the disease which terminated his life, was connected solely with the revenue marine. Your committee find, however, that, at least in one instance, Congress has granted a pension to the widow of an officer of the marine who lost his life in discharge of his duty. The instance alluded to is that of Mrs. Mary Woodard, to whom a pension was granted by the act of Congress approved March 3, 1853.

Your committee are of opinion that the application of the petitioner is of equal merit with that above referred to, and that the precedent is correct in principle. They therefore report the accompanying bill, and recommend its passage.